

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 7585

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SREF, XF, JO
SUBJECT: JORDANIAN PALESTINIANS VIEW A POSSIBLE WEST BANK/
GAZA HOMELAND

1. SUMMARY: THIS TELEGRAM SUMMARIZES AIRGRAM ON SUBJECT
BEING SENT TO ADDRESSEES. WE FIND MIXED REACTIONS WITHIN
JORDANIAN PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY OF ROUGHLY ONE MILLION TO
PROSPECT OF ANY WEST BANK/GAZA "STATE" THAT MIGHT EMERGE
FROM MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT. REFUGEE CAMP RESIDENTS
WHO NUMBER SOME 216,000 CONSTITUTE ONLY GROUP FELT LIKELY
TO WISH TO GO THERE TO LIVE. OTHERS EITHER HAVE TOO
IMPORTANT ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS IN EAST BANK TO
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PULL UP AND LEAVE, OR FEEL THAT LIMITED SCOPE FOR
THEIR PARTICIPATION AT LEAST INITIALLY IN UNCERTAIN
POLITICS OF NEW WEST BANK/GAZA "STATE" ARGUES FOR STAYING
PUT FOR TIME BEING. THOSE WHO WOULD REMAIN IN EAST BANK
WORRY ABOUT LIKELIHOOD OF ANTI-PALESTINIAN BACKLASH IN
JORDAN FOLLOWING CREATION OF PALESTINIAN "STATE" AND

DANGER OF BEING CAUGHT UP IN "GREATER PALESTINE" IRREDENTISM. MANY OF THEM BELIEVE BEST SOLUTION TO THEIR PROBLEMS LIES IN SOME FUTURE CONFEDERAL TIES LINKING WEST BANK/GAZA WITH JORDAN AND POSSIBLY ALSO SYRIA AND LEBANON. WE CONCLUDE THAT JORDANIAN PALESTINIANS PROBABLY WOULD ACCEPT PEACE SETTLEMENT THAT INCLUDED WEST BANK/GAZA HOMELAND, BUT THEY CANNOT BE COUNTED TO LEAD APPLAUSE OR TAKE INITIATIVE IN CONTRIBUTING THEIR POTENTIALLY MODERATE INFLUENCE TO POLITICS OF NEW POLITICAL ENTITY. AS USUAL, JORDANIAN PALESTINIANS ARE POLITICALLY QUIESCENT AND UNWILLING TO TAKE POLITICAL RISKS FOR PALESTINIAN GAINS IN WEST BANK AND GAZA THAT ARE ONLY HYPOTHETICAL. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH INCREASING ATTENTION BEING GIVEN IN ARAB WORLD AND ELSEWHERE TO THE NOTION OF WEST BANK/GAZA PALESTINIAN HOMELAND AS PART OF A MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT, WE HAVE EXAMINED THE ATTITUDES TOWARD THAT IDEA HELD BY JORDANIAN PALESTINIANS. THEIR VIEWS ARE IMPORTANT. THEY COMPRISE THE LARGEST SINGLE GROUP OF PALESTINIANS ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD. THEY HAVE THE CLOSEST RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE WEST BANK OF ANY OF THE PALESTINIANS LIVING IN EXILE. THEIR COUNTRY OF REFUGE--JORDAN--ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL BE AS INVOLVED AS ANY ARAB STATE WITH FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS ON THE WEST BANK.

3. THE ROUGHLY ONE MILLION PALESTINIANS IN EAST JORDAN HAVE MIXED VIEWS ABOUT THE MATTER. WHILE GENERALLY THEY WOULD WELCOME THE CREATION OF SUCH A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND (ALTHOUGH DISAPPOINTINGLY SMALL), ONLY THE

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216,000 LIVING IN REFUGEE CAMPS ARE THOUGHT LIKELY TO WANT TO GO THERE TO LIVE, AT LEAST INITIALLY. DEPENDING ON SHAPE OF ANY FUTURE GOVERNMENT OF A WEST BANK/GAZA STATE, OTHERS WITH DEEPER ROOTS IN EAST JORDAN WOULD HAVE MORE TO LOSE BY SUCH A MOVE AND WOULD TRY TO KEEP THEIR OPTIONS OPEN.

4. THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN IN JORDAN SINCE BEFORE 1948 AND THOSE WHO CAME AS A RESULT OF THE 1948 ARAB-ISRAELI WAR (AND DO NOT LIVE IN CAMPS) HAVE A NETWORK OF FAMILY AND ECONOMIC TIES TO THE EAST BANK. MOREOVER, THEIR PALESTINIAN HOMES ARE IN THAT PART OF THE FORMER PALESTINE MANDATE THAT BECAME ISRAEL AND, THUS, WOULD NOT BE PART OF THE PROPOSED NEW PALESTINIAN HOMELAND. "DISPLACED PERSONS", WHO CAME FROM THE WEST BANK FOLLOWING THE 1967 WAR, HAVE MORE REASON TO RETURN, BUT MANY OF THEM, TOO, HAVE ACQUIRED ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN THE CURRENTLY BOOMING EAST BANK THAT OUTWEIGH WHAT THEY

BELIEVE WOULD BE THEIR ECONOMIC PROSPECTS IF THEY WERE TO RETURN TO A CROWDED WEST BANK/GAZA "STATE". THE POLITICALLY ACTIVE CLASS AMONG JORDANIAN PALESTINIANS HAVE CAREERS THAT ARE MORE MOBILE (LAW, MEDICINE, THE UNIVERSITIES) THAN THOSE BASED ON LAND OR FIXED ENTERPRISES AND, THUS, THEY ARE NOT AS TIED TO JORDAN AS ARE BUSINESSMEN. HOWEVER, THEY DOUBT THAT THERE WOULD BE MUCH ROOM FOR THEM AT LEAST INITIALLY IN THE POLITICS OF THE WEST BANK/GAZA WHERE THOSE MORE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PLO AND WITH POLITICAL LEADERSHIP WITHIN WEST BANK DURING OCCUPATION WOULD HAVE A HEAD START. THESE MEN, BY NO MEANS LIMITED TO PRO-HASHEMITE NOTABLES, BELIEVE THEIR POLITICAL PROSPECTS IN WEST BANK, AND THUS THEIR INCENTIVE TO RETURN THERE, DEPEND IN LARGE PART ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH OTHER ARAB STATES FORCE POLITICAL MODERATION ON THE POLITICS OF ANY SUCH "NEW PALESTINE."

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5. THE PRESENT CONSENSUS AMONG EAST BANK PALESTINIANS IS THAT THOSE WHO WOULD STAY IN JORDAN FOLLOWING THE CREATION OF A WEST BANK/GAZA "STATE" WOULD FACE STRONGER ANTI-PALESTINIAN ATTITUDES IN JORDAN (ALTHOUGH KING HUSSEIN SAYS PRIVATELY HE IS DETERMINED TO PREVENT OR CONTAIN SUCH A BACKLASH). PALESTINIANS WOULD CONTINUE TO BE IMPORTANT TO JORDAN ECONOMICALLY --E.G., ASIDE FROM THEIR ENTERPRISE AND EXPERTISE LOCALLY, REMITTANCES FROM WORKERS (MOSTLY PALESTINIANS) IN THE OIL RICH GULF STATES AMOUNTED TO \$190 MILLION IN THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS OF THIS YEAR AND MAY TURN OUT TO BE JORDAN'S LARGEST FOREIGN EXCHANGE SOURCE IN 1976. MOREOVER, JORDAN'S "PALESTINIAN CONNECTION" IS A MAJOR REASON FOR ITS DIPLOMATIC IMPORTANCE IN THE REGION. NONETHELESS, JORDANIAN PALESTINIANS SUSPECT THAT FOLLOWING THE POSSIBLE CREATION OF ANY PALESTINIAN HOMELAND, JORDAN WOULD MOVE TO ENSURE THAT ITS OWN RESIDUAL PALESTINIAN POPULATION PLAYS A DISTINCTLY SUBORDINATE POLITICAL ROLE TO THE EAST BANKERS. THEY ALSO EXPECT GREATER PRO-EAST BANK DISCRIMINATION IN BUSINESS PRACTICES, GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS, AND THE LIKE. SOME FEAR THESE CONDITIONS WOULD OVER TIME MAKE THEIR COMMUNITY RIPE FOR EXPLOITATION BY THOSE WHO WANT AND THOSE WHO FEAR A "GREATER PALESTINE." MANY BELIEVE THEIR BEST PROSPECTS, ECONOMICALLY AND POLITICALLY, LIE IN THE EMERGENCE OF SOME FORM OF CONFEDERAL OR OTHER CLOSER POLITICAL ASSOCIATION EITHER WITH JORDAN SINGLY, AS PROPOSED BY KING HUSSEIN PRIOR TO THE RABAT CONFERENCE, OR WITH THE EAST FRONT ARAB STATES --JORDAN, SYRIA, WEST BANK/GAZA PALESTINE, AND LEBANON.

6. WE CONCLUDE THAT JORDANIAN PALESTINIANS
WOULD ACCEPT A MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT THAT INCLUDES
A WEST BANK/GAZA HOMELAND, BUT THEY CANNOT
BE COUNTED ON TO GET OUT IN FRONT OF PLO LEADERSHIP
IN ACCEPTING SUCH A STATE OR TO PROVIDE THE APPLAUSE
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AND SUPPORT NECESSARY TO OFFSET THE CRITICISM BY
PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS OF SUCH A PEACE AGREEMENT.
MOREOVER, JORANIAN PALESTINIANS, WHO MIGHT CONTRIBUTE
A MODERATE INFLUENCE IN PALESTINIAN POLITICS, ARE
UNLIKELY TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE TO GET INVOLVED IN
THAT POLITICAL ARENA, AT LEAST IN THE NEAR FUTURE.
THEY WOULD NEED AN EFFORT BY OTHER ARAB STATES TO
ENCOURAGE POLITICAL MODERATION IN THE PLO AND
WEST BANK/GAZA POLITICS BEFORE DOING SO. MANY
JORDANIAN PALESTINIANS SUPPORT THE IDEA OF AN ARAB
CONFEDERATION THAT INCLUDES WEST BANK/GAZA AS THE
BEST LONG TERM SOLUTION TO THEIR PROBLEMS.
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